EAST LAKE SHORE DRIVE

DISTRICT

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

ORIGINALLY SUBMITTED TO THE
COMMISSION ON CHICAGO
HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS
IN NOVEMBER, 1981

REVISED OCTOBER, 1984

East Lake Shore Drive District

The proposed district includes the Drake Hotel, 179 through 229 East Lake Shore Drive, 999 North Lake Shore Drive, and Lincoln Park south of Lake Shore Drive.

The buildings of the East Lake Shore Drive District were built during the first three decades of the twentieth century and typify an elegant urban lifestyle that was developing in Chicago at that time. The years between 1900 and 1930 were a period of significant growth for Chicago, especially the decade of the 1920s. As Mayer and Wade describe in *Chicago: Growth Of A Metropolis:*

> The end of World War I found Chicago poised for a new decade of extraordinary growth. The war effort had diverted the city's energies to supplying the troops and manufacturing military hardware. Residential building slackened and normal commercial and industrial expansion were postponed. With the coming of peace, this pent-up demand suddenly broke loose. A new skyline rose above the Loop; outlying areas in the city filled up quickly; the rapidly increasing use of the automobile produced a whole new set of suburbs; and over 60,000 persons were added to the municipal population each year. Few decades had been so fruitful for the city; none left such a clear mark on contemporary Chicago.

One of Chicago's most outstanding accomplishments during the 1920s was the implementation of parts of Burnham and Bennett's Chicago Plan of 1909. Two important projects proposed in this historic document of urban planning led to the dynamic development of North Michigan Avenue, Streeterville, and the Gold Coast. A double-deck lift bridge was constructed to span the Chicago River at Michigan, formerly called Pine Street, and the street was widened into a boulevard. Also at that time, priority consideration was given to the improvement and conservation of the downtown lakefront and this concern influenced the development of East Lake Shore Drive.

Streeterville and the Gold Coast

The Drake Hotel and the apartment buildings on East Lake Shore Drive are all sited in an area familiarly known as Streeterville. The name comes from George Wellington Streeter, surely one of Chicago's most colorful characters. In July, 1886, while gunrunning to Latin America, Streeter, originally a circus promoter, ran aground on a sandbar located about 450 feet offshore of what is now the vicinity of Chicago Avenue. As lake currents and garbage wagons filled in the land around his beached vessel, Streeter decided to lay claim to the territory which by 1890 encompassed 186 acres. He reinforced his squatter's right by producing a map which he said indicated that the land was not part of the original federal grant of land for settlement into states. As "Governor" of this district, Streeter proceeded to sell lots to gullible investors. Outraged by the dubious and highhanded actions of this "rude, blasphemous, drunken thief," leading citizens such as Potter Palmer and N.K. Fairbank (who owned considerable property just west of Streeterville) moved against him, declaring the land theirs by riparian right. Despite numerous confrontations between Streeter and the establishment forces, it was not until 1918 that the court finally ruled against the claims of the tenacious Streeter. Once he was evicted, development interests quickly moved in to capitalize on this prime piece of real estate.

The East Lake Shore Drive District is also situated within Chicago's Gold Coast. Long identified with the city's social and civic leaders, the Gold Coast extends along the lake shore from East Chestnut Street to Lincoln Park, and west from the lake to North Dearborn Parkway. By 1930, this had become the pre-eminently desirable residential neighborhood in the city. The location offered a unique combination rarely found within city limits: immediate accessibility to the central business district (only a mile and a half to the south) and scenic surroundings of lake, beach, and park. Palatial single-family detatched homes for the wealthy along with fashionable schools, churches, and clubs predominated in the area. The first apartment buildings on Lake Shore Drive were those at 1100 and 1130 North Lake Shore Drive. The former was designed by Marshall and Fox and built in 1906; the latter was designed by Howard Van Doren Shaw and built in 1911. Both exemplify what became the standard configuration of apartment buildings along the lakefront. High property values dictated a long and narrow building with the narrow side facing the lake. East Lake Shore Drive would be one exception to this rule, as the land here had been laid out in fifty-foot widths.

Eclectic Architectural Styles

Architectural styles prevalent in the early part of the twentieth century can generally be divided into two categories: the academic and the progressive. Chicago was the scene of novel approaches to the design of commercial and residential structures, as typified in the works of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. This progressive trend, although widely influential, did not find widespread public acceptance, particularly in the field of residential design. Historical eclecticism is an umbrella term used to denote those buildings whose styles fall into the academic mode in which designs were based on a past precedent

or example. Forms were culled from a variety of earlier sources such as the American Georgian, English Gothic, Italian Renaissance, or French Baroque periods. Nevertheless, architects working in this tradition were not mere copyists. Rather they employed considerable discrimination even within a framework of historical prototypes or motifs. Architectural historian William H. Jordy explains:

> First, of course, he had freedom in selecting his style (Renaissance or Gothic, for example); then he had freedom to work eclectically within the chosen style (in Renaissance design, perhaps a fragment from the Palazzo Medici combined with another from the Giralda); freedom to invent or adapt (a Renaissance window enframement adjusted to the demands of a plate-glass store window); freedom even to create (a "modernized" variant of a Renaissance detail).

While salient characteristics varied according to the style chosen, the better buildings usually were marked by regular rhythms, excellent scale and proportion, solid construction, fine workmanship, and often imaginative and efficient floor plans. Furthermore, architects either trained at or influenced by the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris were imbued with a sensitivity to the urban environment, acknowledging that buildings should be incorporated into an orderly, harmonious cityscape. These qualities in architecture are being re-evaluated and appreciated anew today. They are the qualities that most distinguish the East Lake Shore Drive District.

The Drake Family and their Hotel

The Drake name had long been synonymous in Chicago with fine hotel hospitality when the hotel at Michigan Avenue and East Lake Shore Drive was begun in 1919. John Burroughs Drake (1826-1895), pioneer hotel operator, enjoyed a national reputation as "the most skilful hotelkeeper in the United States — a perfect master of the business." Originally from Ohio, he became a partner in 1855 of the Gage brothers running the Tremont House. Drake bought complete control of that hotel in 1868 and continued its operation until 1871 when it was destroyed by the Chicago Fire. In 1874, he became proprietor of the celebrated Grand Pacific Hotel located where the Continental Illinois National Bank now stands. One of the founders of the Chicago Commercial Club and the Presbyterian Hospital, Drake also served as a fire commissioner, an officer of the Illinois Trust and Savings Bank, and a director of the Chicago and Alton Railroad. The family tradition was ably continued by Drake's two sons, Tracy Corey and John, Jr., who built and operated the Blackstone Hotel which was completed in 1910 on South Michigan Avenue. In 1919, the Drake brothers formed the Whitestone Hotel Company to finance and operate a comparably luxurious hotel on North Michigan Avenue. Other important stockholders in this venture included Louis G. and Edward F. Swift, J. Ogden Armour, and Honore and Potter Palmer, Jr.

The Drake Hotel was scheduled to open in 1920, and the March, 1919 issue of *The Economist* reported that the structure would be "of unusual magnificence, nothing like it in appearance, arrangement or finishing having ever been attempted in this country. . ." Interestingly, the senior architect of the firm given responsibility for such a significant commission had no formal architectural schooling. Benjamin Marshall (1874-1944) had an innate mastery of architecture coupled with great flair and imagination. Educated at the Harvard School in Kenwood, Marshall went to work at age nineteen for a prominent early Chicago architect, Horatio Wilson. By age twenty-one, he was a partner in Wilson's firm. In 1905, he opened an office with Charles Fox, a partnership which lasted until 1923. Marshall practiced independently until 1931 when he took in two of his employees, Walton and Frank Kegley, as partners. In 1939, Marshall ended his architectural practice and joined Edwin L. Brashears in a real estate development firm which, until recently, owned and managed the Drake Hotel.

Marshall and Fox was one of the leading architectural firms in Chicago during the first decades of the twentieth century. In addition to the Drake Hotel and four of the apartment buildings on East Lake Shore Drive, their best known designs in Chicago include the Blackstone Hotel (1910), the Edgewater Beach Hotel (1921), and the South Shore Country Club (1916). Outside Chicago, Marshall and Fox designed the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Building in Milwaukee, the Forest Theater in Philadelphia, and the Maxine Elliott Theater in New York. As early advocates of large apartment buildings, Marshall and Fox also collaborated on 1200 Lake Shore Drive and 1550 North State Parkway. Marshall and Fox frequently invested in the projects they designed, thus increasing their financial success beyond their lucrative architectural practice. Born to wealth himself, Marshall well understood how to create the spacious surroundings and unabashed elegance then associated with the highest standard of living. In keeping with the lifestyle of the affluent 1920s, Marshall built for himself a lavish lakefront residence in Wilmette described as "Spanish renaissance design on the outside and a Cecil B. DeMille production on the inside," where he entertained, among others, the Prince of Wales and Rudolph Valentino. Always flamboyant, he is remembered for his dashing appearance, his white Packard automobiles, and the bevy of young ladies he habitually escorted about town.

Considerably more sedate than his partner, Charles E. Fox (1870-1926) came to Chicago in 1890 from Reading, Pennsylvania. Before joining Marshall, he had trained in civil engineering and architecture with Holabird and Root. Active in professional societies, Fox was twice president of the Illinois Society of Architects and was the first president of the Architects' Club of Chicago, founded in 1925. During World War I, he devoted his practice to hospital design for the Red Cross. A skilled yachtsman, he was a veteran of numerous Mackinac Island races and a commodore of the Chicago Yacht Club. A member of the Board of Governors of the South Shore Country Club, he is credited with the design of its clubhouse which he regarded as one of his most notable achievements.

Stylistically the Drake takes its balanced formal composition and restrained detail from the Italian palaces of High Renaissance Rome and Florence. Constructed of smooth grey limestone, the building is thirteen stories high. It rises from a rectangular base which

changes at the third story to an H-shape. This planning device supplied maximum air and light to the guest rooms on all four exposures. The exterior wall surface is organized into distinct horizontal divisions by pronounced belt courses which separate the second and third stories and the tenth and eleventh stories. A distinctive feature of Italian Renaissance design found in the Drake is the "piano nobile" which, in a Renaissance building, was the principal story, raised above ground and containing the public rooms. This concept was especially appropriate for adaptation to a grand hotel, particularly in the case of the Drake which was ideally located to afford a panoramic view of park, beach, and lake. Here the "piano nobile" is delineated by a unique window treatment. On the East Lake Shore Drive facade, pilasters and columns frame the long windows of the grand ballroom. On the Michigan Avenue and Walton Place facades are full-length arched windows, and within each arch is a triangular pediment; this is known as a tabernacled window. Just above, the third level, a carved stone console with a garland motif supports delicate wrought-iron balconettes. The windows of the eleventh story are enriched with a simple pediment, and foliate ornamentation is found between the windows at the top story. The remainder of the windows are double-hung, arranged in horizontal bands. The whole structure is crowned with a dentiled cornice. Canopies provide a sheltered entrance on both Walton Place and East Lake Shore Drive. These are connected by an interior arcade which provides showcase space for various shops on the street level. In emulating sixteenth-century Italian architecture, Marshall and Fox wisely chose a historical precedent noted for the dignity and serenity of its urban residential designs.

The interior of the Drake was no less impressive than the exterior. Despite the generous scale of lobbies, lounges, and corridors, the grandeur of the Avenue of Palms promenade and the Silver Forest room, the Drake was extolled by *Good Furniture* magazine in 1921 for creating "a reposeful spirit of welcome and home surroundings planned in a large and, to be sure, more or less monumental way" and for eschewing "the traditional theatrical spirit of the big modern hotel." The writer goes on to say: "It stands to the credit of the architects, Messrs. Marshall and Fox, to that of interior designer and furnisher, William Jennings Sinclair, and to the foresight of Messrs. Drake that the ideal of the hotel has found such appealing and noble expression." Innovations at the Drake, such as the much-acclaimed Cape Cod Room (1933) and the Camellia House supper club, designed by the noted interior designer Dorothy Draper in 1941, have only enhanced the Drake's original appeal to both out-of-town visitors and native Chicagoans. Ever since its opening the Drake has successfully functioned as Chicago's "Blair House" for visiting dignitaries. Among the many signatures in the Drake guest book are those of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip of England, King Hussein of Jordan, Nehru of India, Winston Churchill, Eleanor Roosevelt, presidents Herbert Hoover and Dwight Eisenhower, and many celebrities such as Charles Lindbergh and Walt Disney. A Chicago newspaper columnist writing about the Drake in 1977 called his column "a loving salute to a lakeshore dowager. What the Plaza Hotel is to New York, and the Saint Francis is to San Francisco, the Drake is to Chicago — only more so, because in age it is livelier than ever."

In May, 1919, a trade publication titled *Hotel Monthly* described the attraction of the

location as the site for a hotel:

> The site for the Drake, at Lake Shore Drive, North Michigan Avenue, and Walton Place, is ideal for a hotel of this character. The great system of boulevards that meet here, the lake and park surroundings, the Lincoln Park residential district, the close proximity to the Loop with its retail stores and places of amusement, and the short two miles of Michigan Boulevard, the finest driveway in the world, linking it with the Blackstone, gives assurance that this site will grow in value with the years, and the Drake will be a permanent social center.

This proved to be true, and the elegance of the Drake is matched by the apartments built to the east of it between 1912 and 1929.

The Apartment Buildings of East Lake Shore Drive

As the multi-story office block developed to answer the needs of the crowded commercial area, the apartment building developed in response to the residential requirements of the rapidly expanding urban population. Late nineteenth-century critics considered apartment or flat buildings as a serious threat to the stability of family life. By the twentieth century, however, multi-family dwellings had become not only socially acceptable but also desirable. A further impetus for this form of urban residential living was the growth of a new type of real estate ownership: the cooperative apartment plan where both land and building were owned jointly by the tenants. This arrangement combined all the housekeeping convenience and economic advantages of apartment living with the same satisfaction that accompanies private home ownership. The April, 1926 issue of *The Western Architect* devoted an entire article to cooperative apartments which stated:

> It is an expression of the innate desire to possess a fireside, a desire which is beyond the financial reach of those who must dwell in thickly-populated, highly-developed communities where land values are well-nigh prohibitive. The cooperative apartment offers a home which costs less to purchase, requires a smaller original payment without speculation, and costs less to operate than an individual dwelling with similar accommodations in the same neighborhood.

The luxury high-rise apartment building was an extension of the single-family house, but it offered a new challenge to the architect. In a sense, it required the designer to reverse his priorities: the building would be judged by prospective tenants on the suitability of its interior rather than the impressiveness of its facade. The tenant would not look at the apartment building as he would look at his own house; now he would seek in his individual unit the special qualities of individual design preference and privacy customarily associated with the single-family house. The facade, therefore, would necessarily have to be as appealing as possible to a variety of different tastes.

The apartment buildings of East Lake Shore Drive all exhibit similar characteristics which became the norm for this type of construction. In general, facades were simple dignified, and restrained. Any rigid adherence to a particular style or period was avoided. Ornament was restricted to the upper and lower stories and the mid-sections were left largely unadorned. The greatest architectural elaboration was given to entranceways and lobbies. Concentrating the decoration on the street level was calculated to suggest a feeling of domestic scale and distract the viewer's attention away from the building's height. A description of 181 East Lake Shore Drive, designed by the firm of Fugard and Knapp and completed in 1924, in the November, 1924 *Architectural Forum* aptly describes this apartment building formula:

> The exterior design follows the style of the Georgian and Adam periods. The three lower floors are of Indiana limestone, conservatively enriched with small pilasters above the first floor. The shaft of the building is of reddish face brick with light joints, while the upper portion is relieved with simple quoins and cornices of stone, and parapets which have balustrades and urns to create an interesting skyline.

Fugard and Knapp were also responsible for two other structures in the district: 219 East Lake Shore Drive (1922) and 229 East Lake Shore Drive (1919). All of these buildings have particularly handsome entranceways and lobbies.

Fugard and Knapp designed many such apartment buildings in the years between the two world wars. Nevertheless their practice was not exclusively residential. Their commissions included commercial, industrial, and institutional structures. Among these were Wesley Memorial Hospital, the Belmont Hotel, the Cook County Tuberculosis Sanitarium, and the Moody Bible Institute. Graduated from the University of Illinois College of Engineering, John Reed Fugard (1886-1968) was prominent in civic affairs. He served as a commissioner of the Chicago Housing Authority, was a founder and president of the Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council, and was a member of the citizens board of trustees at the University of Chicago. His obituary indicated that he maintained a farm in Silver Hill, Alabama, as well as an apartment on East Lake Shore Drive. George Arnold Knapp was born in Chicago in 1888 and worked for architect Solomon S. Beman from 1909 to 1911 before joining Fugard. After inheriting a family business, the Knapp Brothers Metal Manufacturing Company, he left his architectural practice to head this concern.

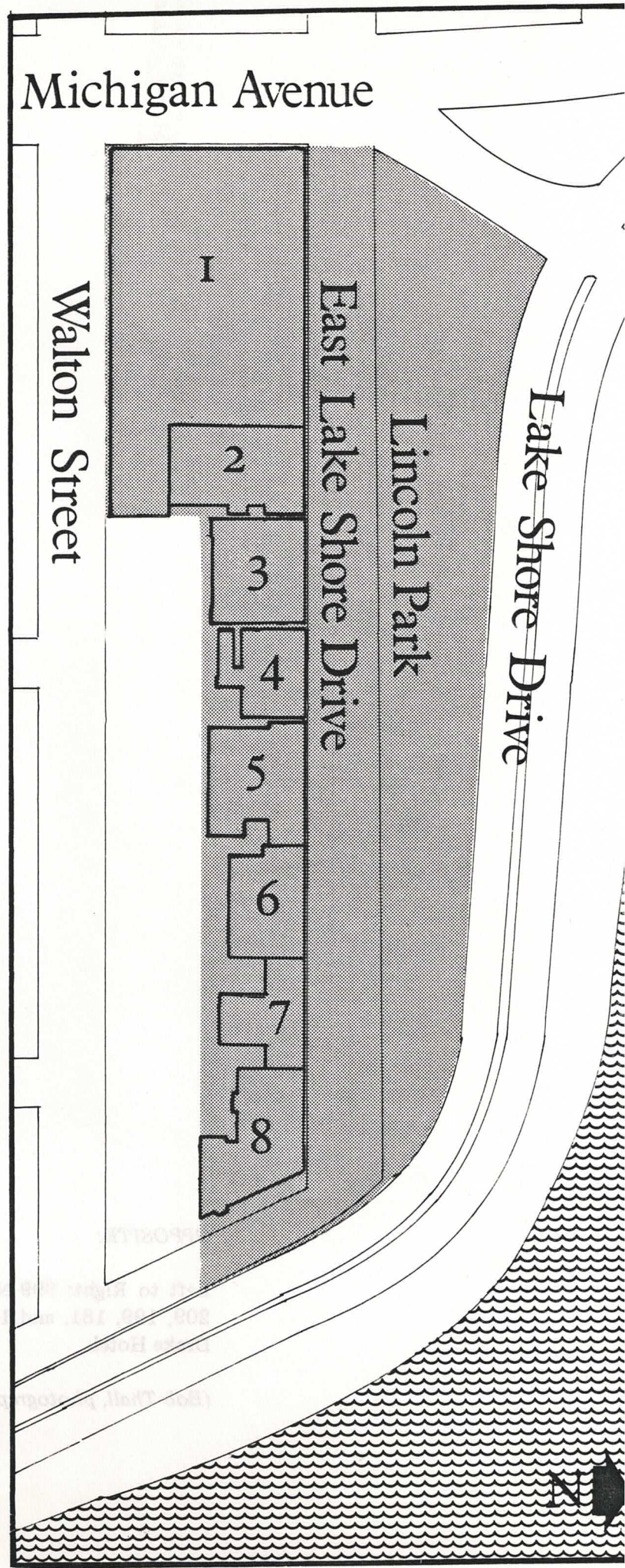
The oldest and most striking building on the street is 999 North Lake Shore Drive, designed by Marshall and Fox and completed in 1912. Capped by a distinctive Mansard roof, it is decidely Second French Empire in style. The wall surface is broken by rounded and rectangular oriels; red brick spandrels interplay with white limestone trim. In contrast is 179 East Lake Shore Drive, designed by Benjamin Marshall and completed in 1929. The horizontally elongated windows, the flat planes of brick, and the absence of decorative detail all make this the most subdued of Marshall's apartment buildings.

Any appreciation of early twentieth-century apartment buildings is incomplete without a knowledge of the floor plans. Many of these have been documented in two publications: Partridge and Bradley's *Directory of Apaprments of the Better Class* (1917) and Baird and Warner's *A Portfolio of Fine Apartment Homes* (1928). Impressive by any spatial standards, they connote a way of life practically unknown today. Quarters for living, sleeping, and for live-in servants are carefully separated. Ample space is allocated for specialized activities or functions; a butler's pantry adjoined the kitchen, for example. A dressing room as well as a bath attached to each bedroom was not uncommon. In appealing to upper-strata society, the floor plans of Marshall and Fox buildings were almost always labeled in French. The floor for a duplex at 199 East Lake Shore Drive included a *chambre a coudre* (sewing room) on the second floor. Rooms on the first floor were alloted for a *bibliotheque* (library) and *l'orangerie* (solarium). Other appointments might include a wine cellar, silver vault, or wood-burning fireplace. Another amenity for the luxury apartment dweller was the 24-hour staffing of elevator and front door by a "correctly liveried" attendant. Of the apartment buildings of this pre-Depression era, architectural historian Carl Condit has written:

> Yet for all this artistic conservatism, . . .in the matter of spaciousness, both of individual rooms and total floor area, soundness of construction, adequacy of insulation, reliability of mechanical equipment, and general appearance, the conservatively designed apartments of the 1920s, with few exceptions, are much superior to their counterparts in the latest of postwar booms.

The East Lake Shore Drive District embodies several features that typically define a historic district. All the structures were built within a relatively short period, the first three decades of the twentieth century, and were designed by architects all working within the same stylistic framework. Within the context of the apartment building and hotel, they represent the apogee of this kind of construction. Architecturally they are related by their formal qualities. Similarity of scale and rhythm, compatibility of color and texture, and uniformity of building materials and setback are characteristics which contribute to making this a consonant urban whole.

There has been a growing realization in the recent past that the modern movement has not always been entirely successful at building pleasing, liveable cities. This has sparked a revival of interest in the more conservative, academic architecture, a tradition of building whose principles governed much of city planning and architecture in the early years of the twentieth century. The East Lake Shore Drive District exemplifies these ideals of sound and decorous urban design. Order and clarity were achieved because no individual building strayed from the accepted standard. The end result was an assured, cohesive cityscape. This concentration of buildings is worthy of preservation as much for what it can tell us of the past as well as what it can teach us for the future. The harmony of urban design found in the East Lake Shore Drive District makes it one of Chicago's most effective architectural ensembles.



The shaded area indicates the proposed district which is made up of Lincoln Park south of Lake Shore Drive, East Lake Shore Drive, and the following buildings:

1. 140 East Walton Street (Drake Hotel): designed by Marshall and Fox and constructed in 1920.

2. 179 East Lake Shore Drive (Drake Tower Apartments): designed by Benjamin H. Marshall and constructed in 1929.

3. 181 East Lake Shore Drive (Mayfair Regent Hotel): designed by Fugard and Knapp and constructed in 1924.

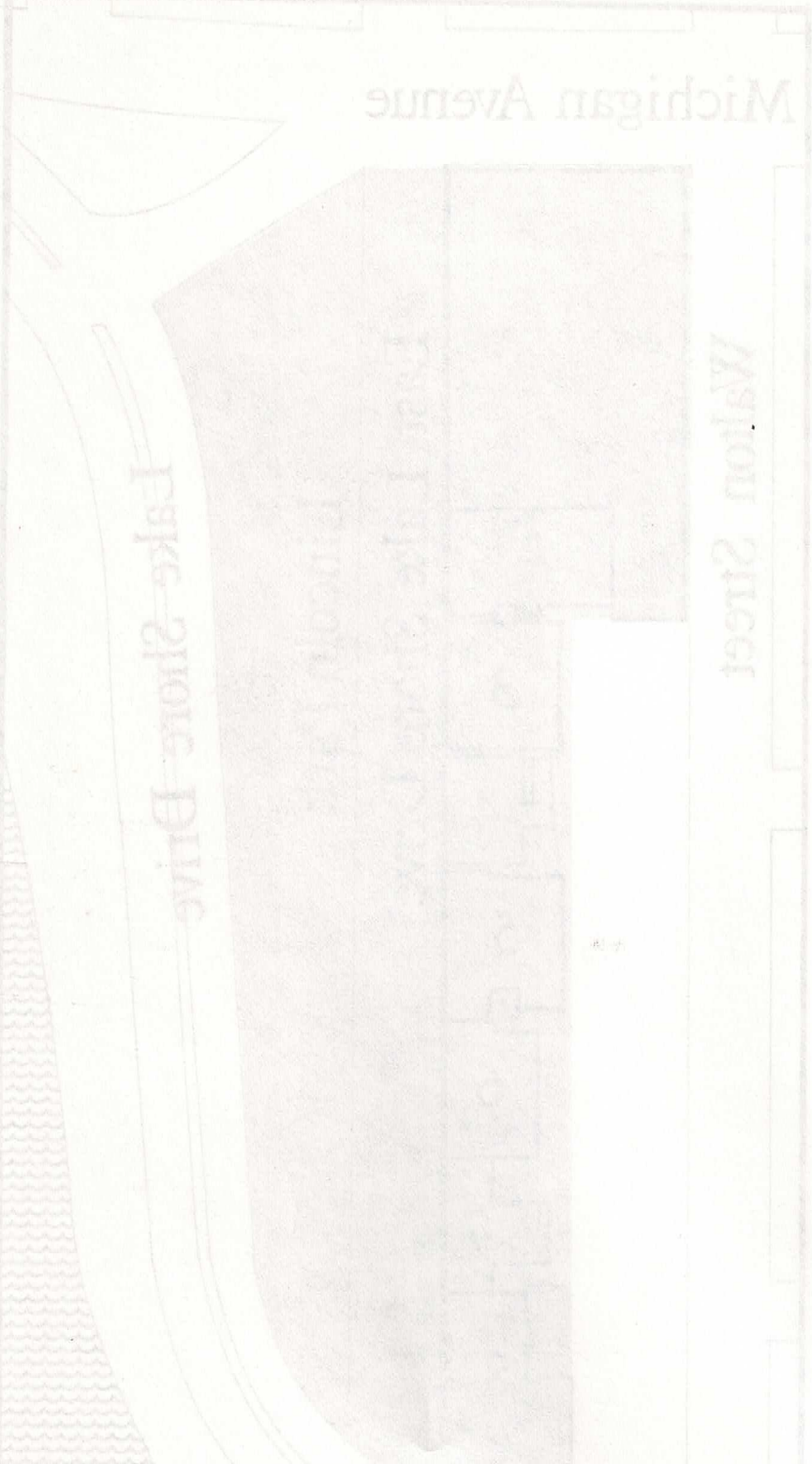
4. 199 East Lake Shore Drive: designed by Marshall and Fox and constructed in 1915.

5. 209 East Lake Shore Drive: designed by Marshall and Fox and constructed in 1924.

6. 219 East Lake Shore Drive: designed by Fugard and Knapp and constructed in 1922.

7. 229 East Lake Shore Drive: designed by Fugard and Knapp and constructed in 1919.

8. 999 North Lake Shore Drive: designed by Marshall and Fox and constructed in 1912.



OPPOSITE:

Left to Right: 999 North Lake Shore Drive; 229, 219, 209, 199, 181, and 179 East Lake Shore Drive, and the Drake Hotel.

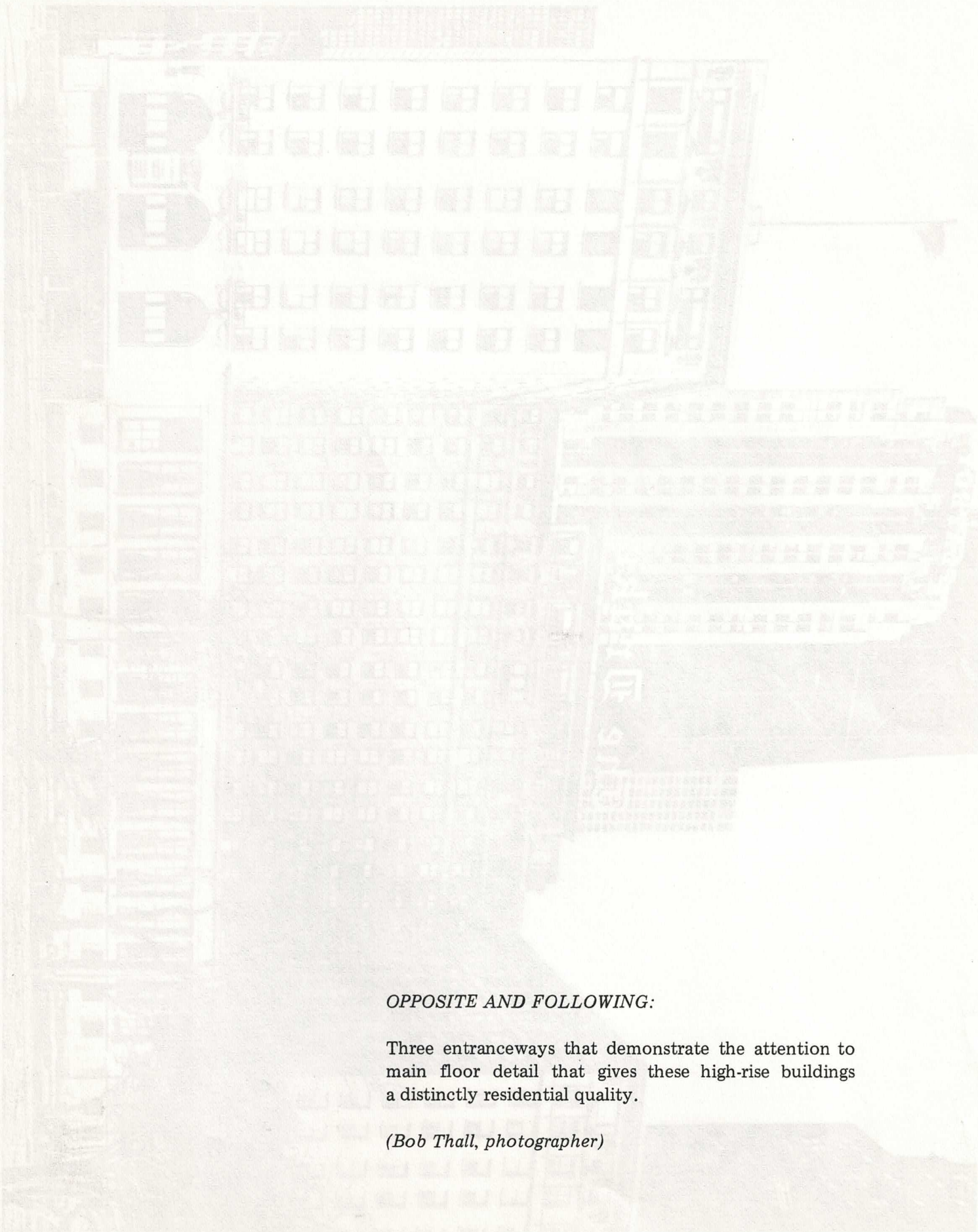
(Bob Thall, photographer)

OPPOSITE:

The Drake Hotel (1920), Marshall and Fox, architects.

(Bob Thall, photographer)

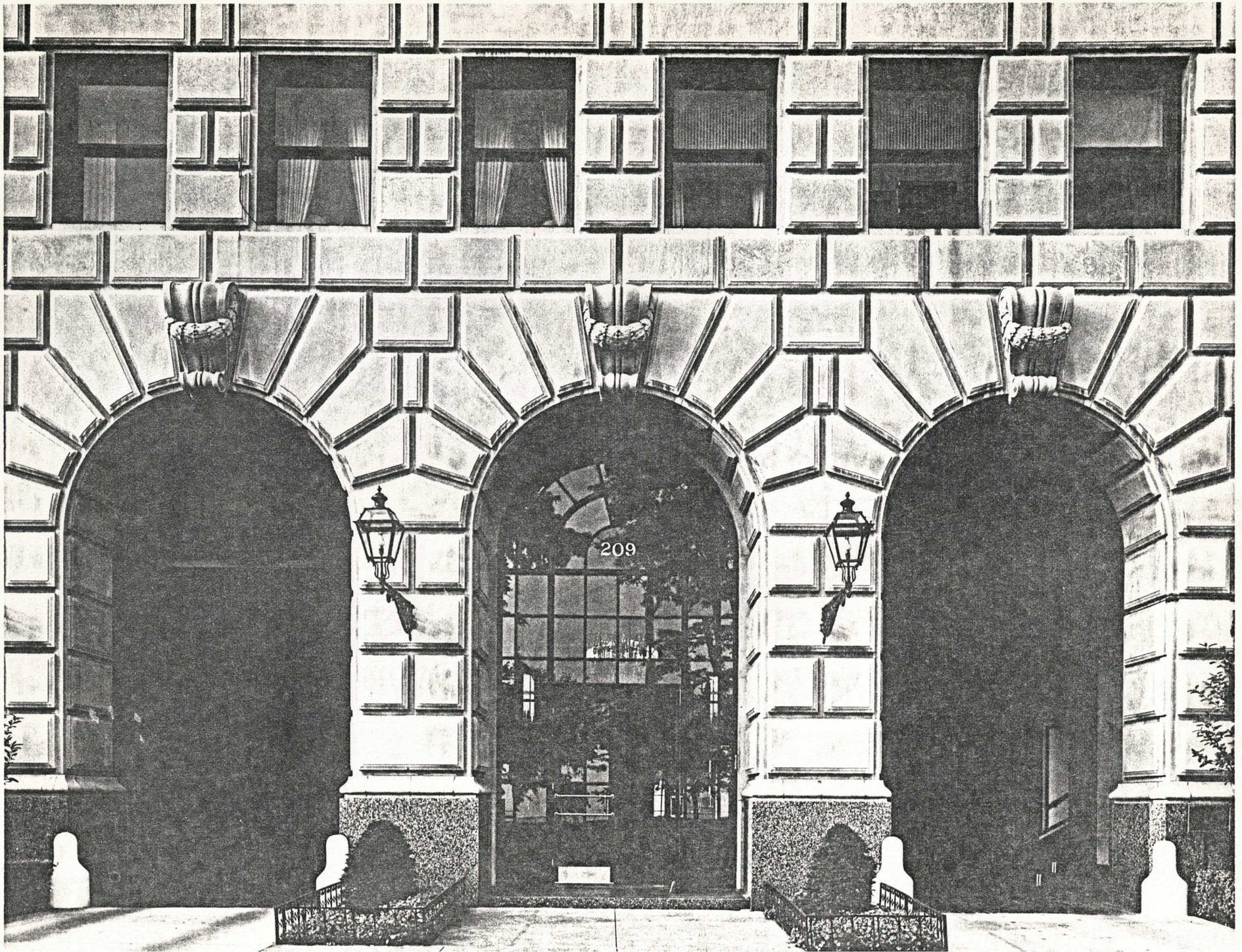
PLAYBOY
The Drake
The Drake



OPPOSITE AND FOLLOWING:

Three entranceways that demonstrate the attention to main floor detail that gives these high-rise buildings a distinctly residential quality.

(Bob Thall, photographer)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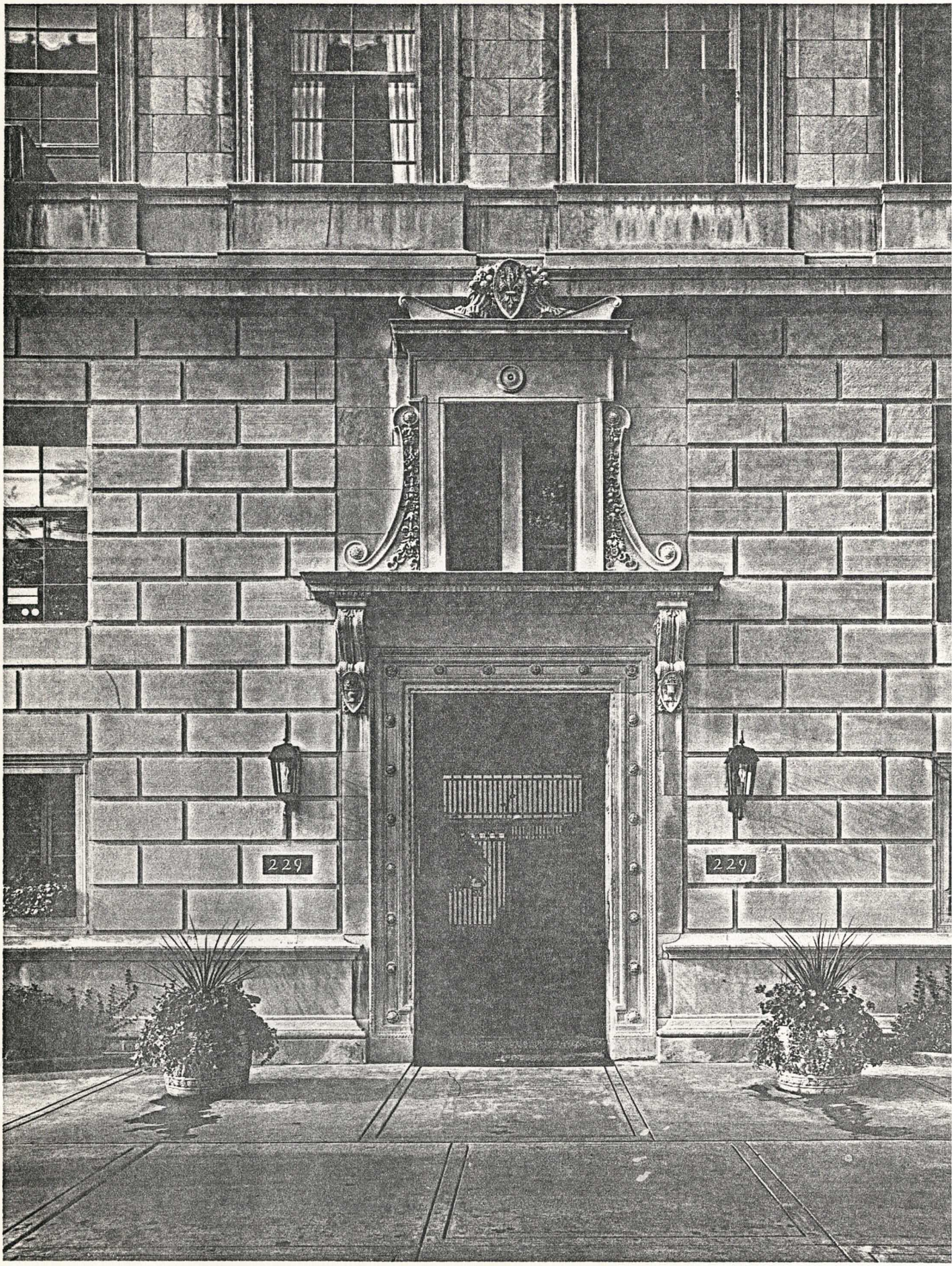
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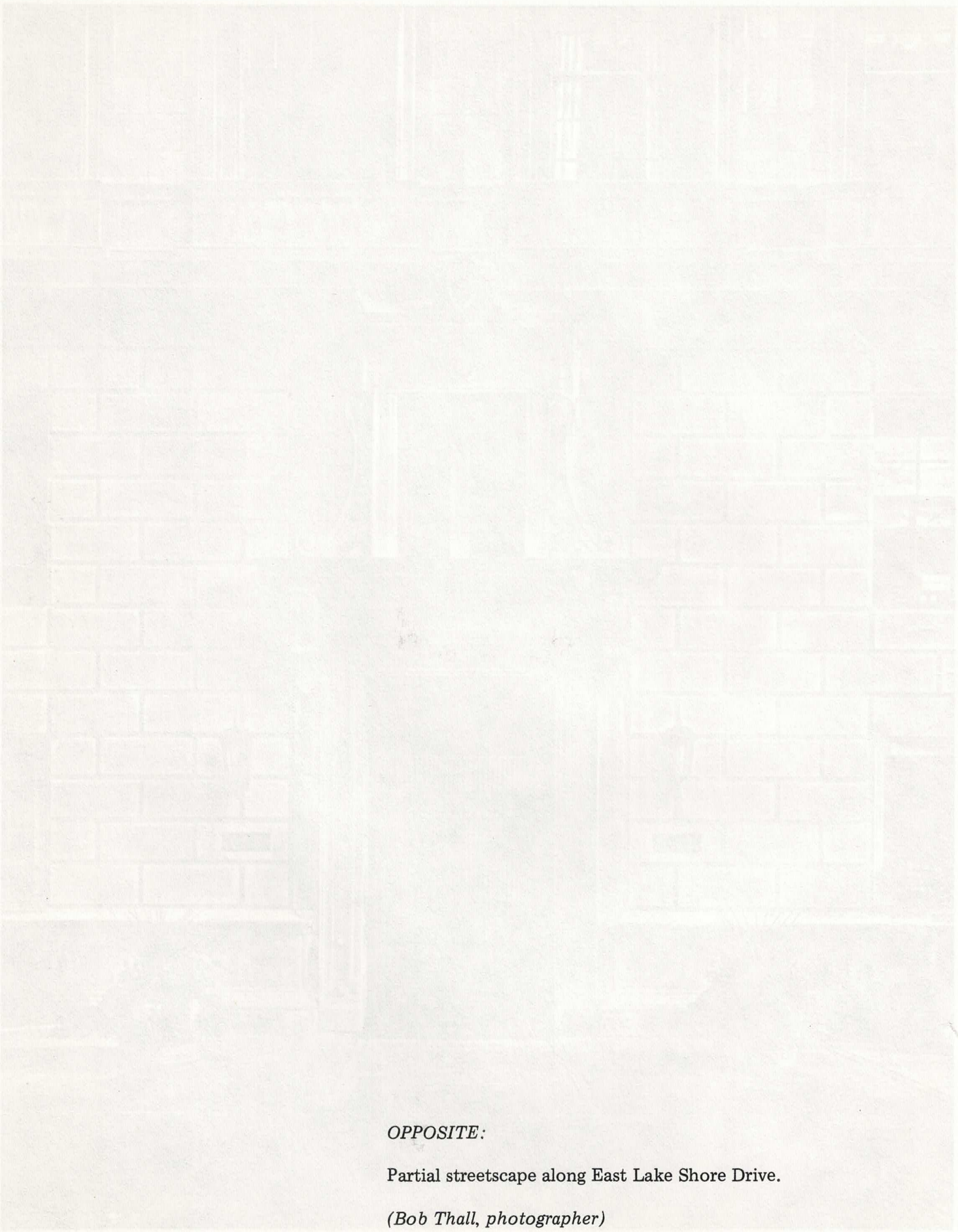
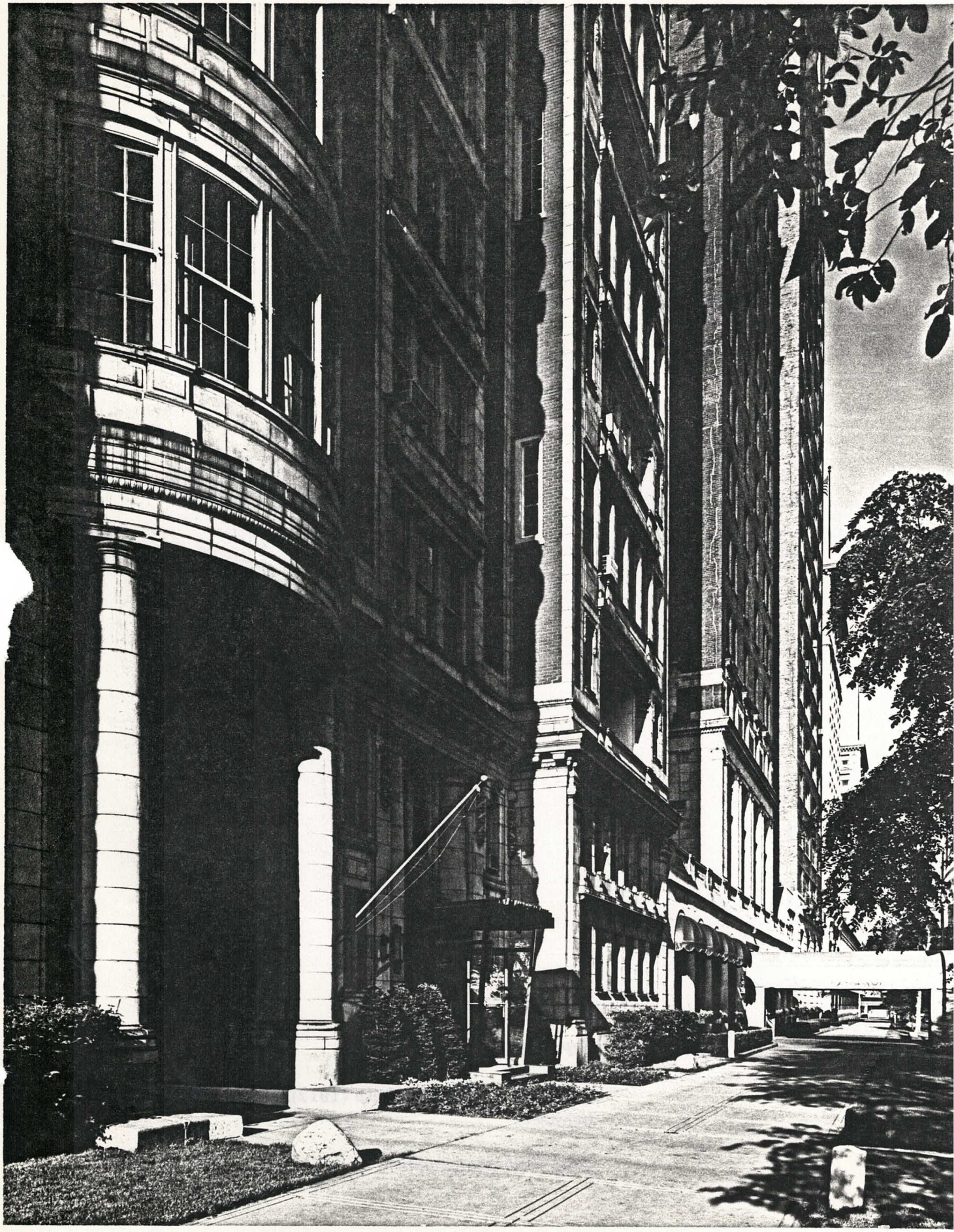
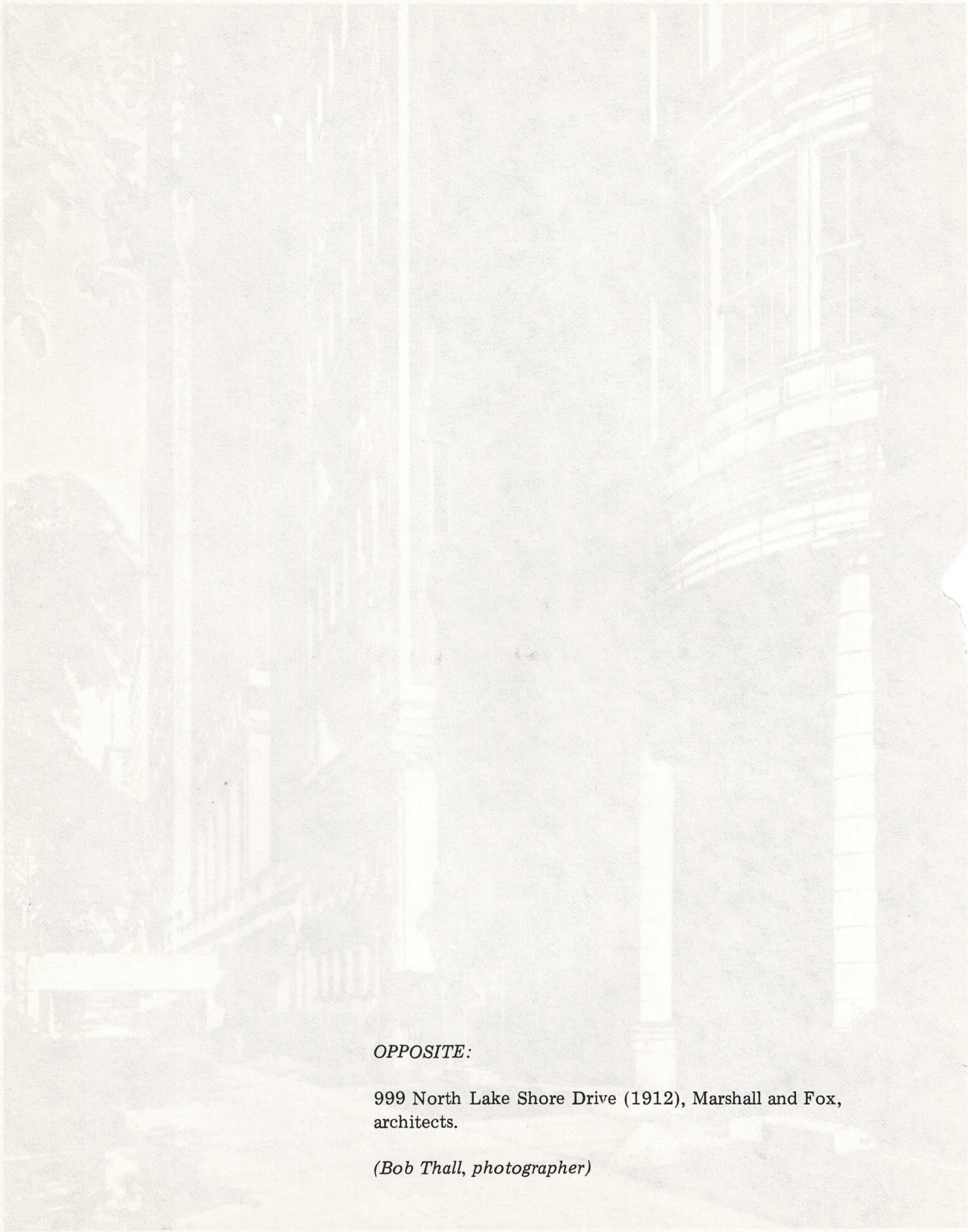


OPPOSITE:

Partial streetscape along East Lake Shore Drive.

(Bob Thall, photographer)





OPPOSITE:

999 North Lake Shore Drive (1912), Marshall and Fox, architects.

(Bob Thall, photographer)

The Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks was established in 1968 by city ordinance, and was given the responsibility of recommending to the City Council that specific landmarks be preserved and protected by law. The ordinance states that the Commission, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, can recommend any area, building, structure, work of art, or other object that has sufficient historical, community, or aesthetic value. Once the City Council acts on the Commission's recommendation and designates a Chicago Landmark, the ordinance provides for the preservation, protection, enhancement, rehabilitation, and perpetuation of that landmark. The Commission assists by carefully reviewing all applications for building permits pertaining to the designated Chicago Landmarks. This insures that any proposed alteration does not detract from the qualities that caused the landmark to be designated.

The Commission makes its recommendations to the City Council only after extensive study. This preliminary summary of information has been prepared by the Commission staff and was submitted to the Commission when it initiated consideration of the historical and architectural qualities of this potential landmark.

CITY OF CHICAGO
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